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Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Technical assistance and capacity-building

Progress in technical assistance and capacity-building for South Sudan in the field of human rights*

Note by the secretariat

1. The Human Rights Council, in its resolution 23/24, requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to report on the situation of human rights in South Sudan and to work with the Government of South Sudan to provide technical assistance and identify additional areas of assistance to strengthen the capacity of South Sudan to fulfil its human rights obligations and commitments. It also requested the High Commissioner to submit an interim report to the Council at its twenty-sixth session on progress in technical assistance and capacity-building in the field of human rights.

2. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights carries out its human rights programme in South Sudan through the Human Rights Division of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). The Division has a mandate to monitor, investigate and report on the human rights situation and to provide technical assistance, as well as to help to build the capacity of national institutions. Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1996 (2011) and 2057 (2012), UNMISS was entrusted with a robust human rights mandate to strengthen the capacity of national stakeholders through the enhancement of their skills and knowledge. A technical cooperation programme under the auspices of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has been embedded in the work of the Division as an important component of the Mission's mandate. The programme has been implemented through activities geared towards building the human rights capacity of specific stakeholders, including of government ministries, the Human Rights Commission, the National Assembly, the South Sudan National Police Service, the Sudan People's Liberation Army, correction officers, civil society organizations, human rights defenders and media groups. These activities, conducted at the national, State and at times county

* Late submission.

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levels, range from advice and recommendations on the human rights aspects of legislation to capacity-building workshops.

3. On 15 December 2013, South Sudan was plunged into a severe crisis triggered by an internal political conflict within the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement. The conflict that ensued has resulted in the loss of thousands of innocent lives and the destruction of such major towns as Bor, Malakal and Bentiu. More than a million people have been displaced or have sought refuge abroad. Security institutions, especially the Sudan People's Liberation Army, have partially disintegrated and their legitimacy has been eroded by the human rights violations committed by their members. A cessation of hostilities agreement signed by the parties to the conflict, in Addis Ababa in January 2014, under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development has proved ineffective, as both parties have continued attacks.

4. At the request of the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner, together with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Prevention of Genocide, visited South Sudan from 28 to 30 April 2014. The visit provided the High Commissioner with an opportunity to witness first-hand the human rights situation in the country and to engage with the country's leaders with regard to their responsibilities to bring an end to the violence and protect civilians from violations of human rights law and humanitarian law. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights also visited South Sudan in January 2014 during the initial stages of the conflict.

5. In the light of the crisis, UNMISS has adjusted its posture and proceeded with a strategic shift from its original mandate of support for peacebuilding, state-building and the extension of State authority to one of strict impartiality in its relations with the parties to the conflict. The Mission has put on hold its operational and capacity-building support, which may enhance the capacity of the parties to engage in conflict, commit human rights violations and abuses and undermine the Addis Ababa agreement. Under a new Security Council mandate, the main focus of the Mission will be the protection of civilians, human rights monitoring and investigations, the creation of conditions for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and support for the implementation of the ceasefire agreement.

6. In the absence of any capacity-building programmes in South Sudan, the High Commissioner, pursuant to Council resolution 23/24, draws the Council's attention to the report by the UNMISS Human Rights Division to the Council.[1] It provides an overview of the situation of human rights in South Sudan since the outbreak of the conflict on 15 December 2013. Based on more than 900 interviews with victims and witnesses, the report describes the widespread negative impact that the conflict has had on the situation of human rights in many parts of the country, in the form of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, rape and other forms of sexual violence, arbitrary arrests and detention, targeted attacks against civilians and attacks on hospitals, as well as against United Nations facilities, the peacekeeping mission and its staff.

[1] http://unmiss.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=5805&language=en-US